

Message Text

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SUBJ: POPULATION INFORMATION

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SUMMARY: INFORMATION IS REPORTED ON POPULATION, THE STATUS OF GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO LIMIT POPULATION GROWTH, AND THE RACE BETWEEN FOOD PRODUCTION AND INCREASING FOOD REQUIREMENTS. GIVEN THE POPULATION DENSITY (1400 PERSONS/SQ.MI.), DOUBLING TIME (25 YEARS IF CURRENT GROWTH RATE IS SUSTAINED), AGE STRUCTURE (45 PERCENT BELOW 159, TOTAL FERTILITY RATE (ESTIMATES RANGE FROM AN AVERAGE OF 6.2 TO 6.9 LIVE BIRTHS TO A WOMAN WHO COMPLETES HER REPRODUCTIVE YEARS), AND PREVAILING PREFERENCE FOR SEVERAL SURVIVING SONS, FUTURE PROSPECTS ARE SOBERING DISPUTE THE BEST AND MOST SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS IMAGINABLE. EVEN IF THE GOVERNMENT ACHIEVED ITS IMPROBABLE TARGET OF REPLACEMENT-LEVEL FERTILITY (TOTAL FERTILITY RATE OF ABOUT 2.6) BY 1985, THE POPULATION WOULD ULTIMATELY BECOME STATIONARY AT ABOUT 170 MILLION (3090 PERSONS/SQ.MI.), IF IT WERE REACHED BY YEAR 2000, THE ULTIMATE POPULATION WOULD REACH ABOUT 245 MILLION (4450/SQ.MI.). THERE ARE, OF COURSE IMPONDERABLES, BANGLADESH'S
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DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION IS UNPRECEDENTED. THEREFORE, IT IS UNKNOWN IN WHAT WAYS A HUMAN SOCIETY MAY BE CAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO AN INELUCTABLE CHALLENGE TO PHYSICAL SURVIVAL. END SUMMARY.

1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION. BDG ESTIMATES 81.1 MILLION MID-1976 POPULATION. CBR AND CDR: 1975--47 AND 17;

1976--46 AND 16; 1977--43 AND 15. ALL ARE ESTIMATES
BASED ON DATA OF DOUBTFUL QUALITY.

2. POPULATION PROGRAM.

A) LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT. THE BDG LEADERS' STRONG
COMMITMENT TO BRINGING ABOUT A RAPID DECLINE IN FERTILITY
IS BASED ON THEIR UNDERSTANDING THAT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT IT. THEIR AWARENESS OF THE
PENALTIES OF DELAY IN ACHIEVING REPLACEMENT-LEVEL
FERTILITY, IN TERMS OF ULTIMATE POPULATION SIZE, HAS
PROMPTED THE POPULATION ADVISOR (I.E., MINISTER) TO
ELEVATE THE DEMOGRAPHIC TARGET TO AN EXTREMELY
AMBITIOUS NET REPRODUCTION RATE OF ONE BY 1985.
SYSTEMATIC ATTEMPTS TO INVOLVE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ARE
STILL MINIMAL. UNION COUNCILS, THE LOWEST-LEVEL
ELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES EACH RESPONSIBLE FOR
ABOUT 20,000 PEOPLE, DURING THEIR ORIENTATION/TRAINING
FOLLOWING ASSUMPTION OF DUTIES SIX MONTHS AGO, WERE
EXHORTED BY NATIONAL LEADERS TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY
PLANNING PROGRAM--TO WHAT EFFECT IS NOT YET EVIDENT.
SOME VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AND A FEW GOVERNMENT PILOT
PROJECTS IN COOPERATIVES AND SOCIAL WELFARE HAVE DEMON-
STRATED THAT LOCAL LEADERS' SOCIAL SANCTION OF BIRTH
CONTROL IS ASSOCIATED WITH CONTRACEPTIVE USAGE RATES
SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.
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B) PROGRAM STATUS. THE PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND DESIGN
DESCRIBED IN REF B IS LARGELY UNCHANGED. THE POPULATION
CONTROL AND FAMILY PLANNING (PCFP) DIVISION FIELD
STAFF--THREE FEMALE AND ONE MALE LOCWQ RESIDENTS PER
UNION--WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY IN PLACE WITH THE THIRD
RECRUITMENT AIMED AT EMPLOYING THE REMAINING HALF OF
THE REQUIRED NUMBER. SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES ARE NOW
BEGINNING THEIR ONE-MONTH TRAINING. EACH SUCCESSIVE
RECRUITMENT (PREVIOUS ONES WERE IN APRIL AND DECEMBER 1976)
HAS BROUGHT FORWARD MORE WOMEN APPLICATIONS FOR JOBS WHICH
IS A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM ACCEPTABLE TRADITIONAL
BEHAVIOR FOR RURAL WOMEN. DURING REGULAR HOME VISITS,
AMONG AN AVERAGE POPULATION OF ABOUT 6,000 EACH, THESE
FIELD WORKERS GIVE FAMILY PLANNING AND MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH (MCH) INFORMATION AND DISPENSE ORAL PILLS,
CONDOMS AND CONTRACEPTIVE FOAM. PRESENT BDG ESTIMATES
OF PREVALENCE OF CONTRACEPTIVE USE ARE ABOUT 7 OR 8 PER-
CENT OF ELIGIBLE COUPLES. THIS COMPARES WITH 4 PERCENT
IN A 1968 EAST PAKISTAN SURVEY AND 1 PERCENT IN A 1975
BASELINE SURVEY BEFORE A SPECIAL CONTRACEPTIVE DISTRI-
BUTION PROJECT IN MATLAB THANA. THERE ARE STILL VACANCIES

IN THE FAMILY PLANNING ORGANIZATION, INCLUDING A FEW DEY POSITIONS. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN GREAT IMPROVEMENT IN THE STAFFING SITUATION SINCE REF. B WAS WRITTEN 18 MONTHS AGO, SHORTLY AFTER THE APPROVAL AND FUNDING OF THE NEW ORGANIZATION.

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C) NEW PROGRAM EMPHASES. THE NATIONAL POPULATION COUNCIL, A CABINET-LEVEL BONDY CHAIRED BY THE PRESIDENT, HAS APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE A PCFP DIVISION PLAN TO MAKE STERILIZATION SERVICES WIDELY AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. MINDFUL OF RECENT INDIAN EXPERIENCE, THE NPC HAS DIRECTED THAT THE PROGRAM MUST BE ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY. THIS ACTION FOLLOWS A NINE-WEEK INTENSIVE STERILIZATION CAMPAIGN, FEBRUARY-APRIL 1977, IN ONE-THIRD OF THE THANAS DURING WHICH NEARLY 76,000 PROCEDURES WERE PERFORMED, WITH ENHANCED COMPENSATION TO CLIENTS, DOCTORS, AND NONPROGRAM RECRUITERS. THIS COMPARES WITH 54,100 PROCEDURES REPORTED PERFORMED IN THE NATIONAL PROGRAM DURING ALL OF CY 1976. THE PLAN OF ACTION TO EXPAND STERILIZATION SERVICES IS IN THE PROCESS OF SECURING BDG PLAN AND BUDGET APPROVALS. FUNDING OF THE PROPOSAL, AS SUBMITTED, WOULD REQUIRE MAJOR DONOR INPUTS. ANOTHER NEW ELEMENT, PROJECTED IN THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN BUT DELAYED IN IMPLEMENTATION, IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNION SUBCENTERS, THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH MCH/FAMILY PLANNING/HEALTH SERVICES AT THE LEVEL OF THE NION (AVERAGE POPULATION: 18,000). AT PRESENT 300 SUBCENTERS ARE ESTABLISHED; MID-1978 TARGET: 1030; EVENTUAL TARGET: OVER 4,300. AGAIN, THE BDG IS LOOKING TO DONORS FOR MOST OF THE COST OF SUBCENTER CONSTRUCTION.

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D) RELATIONSHIP WITH HEALTH SERVICES. ALTHOUGH FAMILY PLANNING AND HEALTH SERVICES ARE ORGANIZATIONALLY SEPARATE FROM NATIONAL LEVEL--INCLUDING SEPARATE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS (I.E., MINISTERS)--TO THE UNION, THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF COOPERATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF HEALTH PERSONNEL IN FAMILY PLANNING. AT THANA LEVEL, THE HEALTH DIVISION PROVIDES SPACE IN ITS HEALTH CENTER BUILDING FOR THE MCH/FP CLINIC, WHICH IS STAFFED BY A POPULATION DIVISION FEMALE PARAMEDIC WHO IS TRAINED TO DELIVER MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH AS WELL AS CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES, INCLUDING IUD INSERTION. HEALTH DIVISION'S 12,000 MALE BASIC HEALTH WORKERS STILL CARRY CONVENTIONAL CONTRACEPTIVES, INCLUDING THE ORAL PILL, FOR ISSUANCE DURING THEIR HOME VISITS BUT THIS ASPECT OF THEIR WORK IS MUCH LESS EMPHASIZED NOW THAT THE POPULATION DIVISION'S FIELD WORKERS ARE IN PLACE. HEALTH DIVISION DOCTORS AT DISTRICT SUBDIVISION AND THANA LEVELS AS WELL AS IN MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITALS ARE THE PRINCIPAL PROVIDERS OF VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION SERVICES. HOWEVER, THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TWO ADVISORS AND BETWEEN THE HEALTH DIVISION AND THE POPULATION CONTROL AND FAMILY PLANNING DIVISION ARE UNEASY AT BEST. THE GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF THE SITUATION AND ITS DELETERIOUS EFFECTS. IT IS RUMORED THAT CORRECTIVE ACTION IS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

E) DONOR ASSISTANCE. SINCE 1973, ABUNDANT DONOR RESOURCES HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE TO THE POPULATION PROGRAM. PRINCIPAL DONORS THE A.I.D., UNFPA, AND IBRD IN COLLABORATION WITH SIX WESTERN COUNTRIES. PROBLEMS OF ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY--IN PARTICULAR, DEFICIENCIES IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION--WHICH WERE PRONOUNCED IN THE EARLY YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE HAVE

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BECOME LESS SEVERE OVER TIME, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE STILL ADMINISTRATIVE SHORTCOMINGS, MOST OF THEM PREVALENT THROUGHOUT THE GOVERNMENT AND INHERENT IN THE EXISTING BUREAUCRATIC SYSTEM. THE BDG IS NOW SEEKING CONSIDERABLY INCREASED FUNDING FROM DONORS FOR NEW PROGRAM EMPHASES, SPECIFICALLY: (I) A MAJOR EXPANSION OF VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION SERVICES DOWN TO THANA LEVEL (ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO U.S. COUNTY, AVERAGE 185,000 POPULATION); AND (II) CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY WELFARE CENTERS AT

UNION LEVEL, STAFFED BY PARAMEDICS OF POPULATION AND HEALTH DIVISIONS GIVEN HEALTH, MCH AND FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES. DONORS' CONTINUING ATTEMPTS TO ASSIST IN OVERCOMING ADMINISTRATIVE DEFICIENCIES ARE IN THE AREAS OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AS WELL AS IN THE ON-GOING PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN BDG OFFICIALS AND RESIDENT DONOR REPRESENTATIVES.

3. NTBPOPULATION PROGRAMS. A) A.I.D.'S BANGLADESH PROGRAM, IN ACCORD WITH ITS CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE, IS DIRECTED TOWARDS INCREASED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF THE POOR MAJORITY WHICH, IN THE CASE OF BANGLADESH, ARE THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION AND OVERWHELMINGLY RURAL. OTHER DONORS ALSO HAVE ALLOCATED RESOURCES TO DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS. THE BDG IS INCREASINGLY TAKING ACTIONS TO TRANSLATE RHETORIC INTO PROGRAMS INTENDED TO BENEFIT AND INVOLVE RURAL PEOPLE. THE RANGE OF ALL THE ABOVE ACTIVITIES INCLUDES SUCH PROJECTS AS RURAL CREDIT FOR LANDLESS AND NEAR LANDLESS AGRICULTURAL WORKERS; INCREASED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL AREAS; ENHANCEMENT OF THE STATUS, ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF WOMEN; INCREASED HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE; INCREASED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION; AND PROPOSALS, STILL IN THE DISCUSSION STAGE, FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE THROUGH A NETWORK OF VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS AND AN AFFORDABLE APPROACH TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION. THE AIMS OF THESE INITIATIVES ARE IN CONSONANCE WITH THE EVIDENCE THAT WIDESPREAD ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION, ACCESSIBILITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES, AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH DECLINING FERTILITY RATES. HOWEVER, MOST OF THESE ACTIVITIES ARE PROMOTED FOR THEIR OWN RESPECTIVE BENEFITS, NOT BECAUSE THEY MAY CONTRIBUTE TO REDUCED FERTILITY.

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B) WITH WORLD BANK AND UNFPA FINANCING, THE BDG IS CONDUCTING PILOT PROJECTS IN WHICH OTHER DEVELOPMENT MINISTRIES ARE PROMOTING FAMILY PLANNING THROUGH THEIR EXTENSION OR OTHER AGENTS WHO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC. MINISTRIES INVOLVED ARE COOPERATIVES (INCLUDING WOMEN'S CO-OPS), SOCIAL WELFARE'S RURAL SERVICES PROGRAM, LABOR, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE, INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, AND THE QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL WOMEN'S REHABILITATION FOUNDATION.

4. FOOD AND POPULATION.

A) PROSPECTS FOR EXPANDING LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION. AT PRESENT, RICE YIELDS IN BANGLADESH ARE AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE WORLD, AVERAGING ONLY AROUND ONE-HALF TON AN ACRE. AS MOST OF THE COUNTRY'S RICELAND IS RICH DELTA SOIL, THERE IS VAST POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVING PRODUCTION. AMONG THE FACTORS LIMITING PRODUCTION ARE LOW USE OF HYVS AND FERTILIZER, LACK OF CREDIT FOR SMALL FARMERS ON REASONABLE TERMS, AND SMALL, FRAGMENTED PLOTS. THESE PROBLEMS ARE BEING ADDRESSED ON A LARGE SCALE BY AID AND OTHER DONORS AS WELL AS THE BDG. PROGRESS HAS BEEN SLOW BUT STEADY SINCE INDEPENDENCE. HYV RICE SEED USE HAS INCREASED FROM SIX PERCENT OF ALL SEED IN 1970/71 TO FIFTEEN PERCENT IN 1975/76.

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THE USE OF MODERN IRRIGATION METHODS (POWER PUMPS AND TUBEWELLS) AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL IRRIGATION HAS INCREASED FROM 39 PERCENT IN 1970/71 TO ABOUT 47 PERCENT IN 1975/76. MODERN FERTILIZER OFFTAKE HAS INCREASED 66 PERCENT SINCE 1970/71 AND LONG RUN PROJECTIONS PREDICT AT LEAST A STEADY 6 PERCENT ANNUAL INCREASE IN FERTILIZER USE. AT PRESENT INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY 5 TO 10 PERCENT OF ALL AGRICULTURAL CREDIT AND THIS IS PROVIDED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO LANDOWNERS. EXTENSIVE BDG AND INTERNATIONAL DONOR EFFORTS ARE PLANNED TO MAKE INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT AVAILABLE TO THE 50 OR 60 PERCENT OF FARMERS WHO ARE LANDLESS. WE,

THEREFORE, EXPECT THE FUTURE RATE OF GROWTH OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION TO EXCEED THE AVERAGE OF THE LAST 15 YEARS (2.27 PERCENT).

B) DEPENDENCY ON FOOD IMPORTS. IF AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION INCREASES ONLY AT THE RECENT, HISTORICAL RATE OF 2.27 PERCENT ANNUALLY BETWEEN 1977 AND 1985, AND THE POPULATION CONTINUES TO INCREASE AT THE PRESENT ESTIMATED RATE OF 2.8 PERCENT ANNUALLY, AND IF THE MINIMUM GRAIN REQUIREMENT IS 15.5 OUNCES PER CAPITA PER DAY, THEN BY 1985 BANGLADESH WOULD HAVE TO IMPORT 2.5 MILLION TONS OF FOODGRAIN. HOWEVER, FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY BY 1985 IS BOTH THE BDG'S AND THE MISSION'S GOAL AND WE ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE BOTH ENDS OF THIS FOOD/POPULATION EQUATION. WHILE FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY MAY NOT BE REACHED, THE IMPORT REQUIREMENTS AT LEAST SHOULD NOT INCREASE, BARRING LARGE-SCALE NATURAL CALAMITIES.

C) ABILITY TO PAY FOR IMPORTS. THE BDG HAS DEMONSTRATED THE IMPORTANCE IT PLACES ON FOOD BY BUYING ON THE COMMERCIAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MARKET WHENEVER IT HAS NOT RECEIVED GRAIN IN AMOUNTS IT CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT. FOOD IS A CRITICAL COMMODITY TO THE BDG AND IT WILL PAY THE MARKET PRICE WHEN IT FEELS THAT IS NECESSARY. IT IS NOT CAPABLE, HOWEVER, OF PAYING FOR ITS FULL IMPORT REQUIREMENTS.

D) UNLOADING CAPACITY. THE TWO PORTS OF CHITTAGONG AND KHULNA HAVE THE CAPACITY TO UNLOAD ALL THE IMPORTED GRAIN THAT THE COUNTRY NEEDS. A PROBLEM IN THE PAST HAS BEEN THAT MANY OF THE FOOD SHIPMENTS HAVE BEEN BUNCHED TOGETHER DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS SO THAT A BIG BACKLOG BUILT UP PERIODICALLY. THIS PROBLEM COULD BE RESOLVED BY BETTER SPACING OF ARRIVALS.

E) INTERNAL TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE. THIS IS WHERE THE SYSTEM IS WOEFULLY INADEQUATE. FOOD DOES NOT MOVE EFFICIENTLY INTO DEFICIT AREAS WHEN IT IS NEEDED, AND FREQUENTLY STORAGE IS INADEQUATE. PROGRESS IS BEING MADE SLOWLY ON THESE AREAS, BUT PRODUCTION AND PROCUREMENT TAKE FIRST PRIORITY. AN OVERALL FOOD PLAN WHICH INCORPORATES BOTH POLICY AND OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IS NEEDED. BERGESEN

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